

REMARKS

In view of the Appeal Brief filed on July 30, 2003, prosecution was reopened and an Office Action was mailed October 24, 2003. The Office Action rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 5, 10, 14, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 35, 40, 41, 45-47, and 49 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 1,962,906 to Mueller (“Mueller”) in view of U.S. Patent 4,731,968 to Obino (“Obino”). The Office Action also rejected claims 11 and 50 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mueller in view of Obino and further in view of U.S. Patent 4,866,891 to Young (“Young”). The Office Action also rejected claims 12, 13, 48 and 51 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mueller in view of Obino and further in view of U.S. Patent 510,720 to Stewart (“Stewart”). Finally, the Office Action rejected claims 38 and 52 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mueller in view of Obino and further in view of Stewart.

The Office Action objected to claims 2, 6-9, 15 and 18 for being dependant upon a rejected base claim, but being allowable if rewritten into independent form to include all of the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims. Accordingly, to expedite allowance of the application, Applicant has canceled, without prejudice, claims 1, 5, 17, 21, 35, and 45-52 and amended claims 2, 6, 15 and 18 into independent form to include all of the limitations of their respective base claims and any intervening claims. Applicant respectfully submits that independent claims 2, 6, 15 and 18 are in allowable form. Furthermore, since claims 7-9 already depended on claim 6, claims 38 and 40-41 have been amended to depend on claim 6,

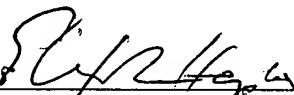
claims 3-4 and 10-14 have been amended to depend on claim 2, and claims 19-20 and 24 have been amended to depend on claim 18, Applicant respectfully submits that these dependent claims are also in allowable form. Accordingly, Applicant respectfully requests a notice of allowance for the remaining pending claims, namely claims 2-4, 6-15, 18-20, 24, 38 and 40-41.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned, if doing so will help expedite the Notice of Allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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